

LUMINARIES OF INDIAN MEDICINE

(From the earliest times to the present day)

Dr. K. R. Srikanta Murthy, L.A.M.S., H.P.A.

Professor and Head of the Department of Basic Principles
Govt. College of Indian Medicine, Mysore.

FOREWORD BY

Dr. P. M. Mehta, M.D., M.S., F.C.P.S., F.I.C.S.

Former Director, Central Institute of Research in
Indigenous Systems of Medicine, Jamnagar.

1968

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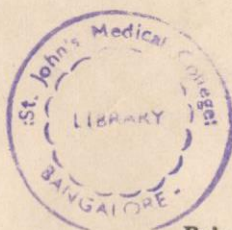
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Dedicated to
My Revered Preceptors

अनादिमव्ययं दिव्यं व्यापकं विश्वशेषजम् ।

त्रिकालाबाधितं नित्यमायुर्वेदमुपासहे ॥

To that Science of life—'Ayurveda'. I propitiate ;
which had neither a beginning nor has an end,
which shines with brilliance ; Universal under
different names ; true in the past, present and
future ; thus eternal.

All that our forefathers wrought
With true prophetic thought must be defended.

—GANDHIJI

PREFACE

Ever since I started my study of Ayurveda, I have felt a dire need for a comprehensive but concise book dealing with the biography of great Ayurvedists—past and present. During my post-graduate study, I felt it still more acutely. By this I do not mean to say that there are no books at all on this subject. On the contrary, we have very scholarly treatises in Sanskrit, English and other languages of India and Europe which discuss the subject in very elaborate detail.

Unless a perseverant and devoted study is made of such great dissertations, it is nearly impossible for an average, interested reader to get to know the great personages and their significant contribution to Ayurveda. Even a research worker may get lost in abundance of facts and fancies. Such being the case the plight of students of medicine, can well be imagined.

With the happy trend in recent years of increasing interest among students of medicine—both Indian and Western—for the study of history of ancient Indian Medicine, the need for a concise text is all the more great.

With this in view, I started compiling information on the subject and began publishing a serial entitled 'Luminaries of Indian Medicine' in the National Medical Journal, Mysore. Encouraging letters from various quarters—Institutions, Teachers, Research scholars and Students—have emboldened me to publish the same in this book form.

In this survey I have not gone into much details of discussion about the identity, dates etc., of the luminaries but have presented the widely accepted view of modern authorities on Ayurveda and other branches. Due attention has, however, been paid, to point out the significant contribution of every person for the advancement of Ayurveda. I have made the survey upto date as in contrast with other books, which usually end by about the

17th century A.D. I know that there are more Luminaraies and facts than those found in this book but I have selected the brighter and salient ones only.

History of Indian Medicine is not complete without a sequential survey of its origin, growth and progress. It is my fond hope to publish that survey in the near future, if only the grace of Almighty and encouragement of the public be with me.

In this uphill task, I have received good amount of inspiration from my students to whom I have the occasion to teach history of Ayurveda. I am reminded here of the statement that a teacher learns while he teaches, which has been more true in my case. Hence my first thanks should go to them.

Next, I owe a great debt of gratitude to sagacious Dr. P. M. Mehta, former Director, Central Institute of Research in Indigenous systems of Medicine, Jamnagar. I was fortunate to be one of his students at Jamnagar and it is he who nursed my interest in the study of history of Ayurveda. His patronising care in my writings is with this book in the form of the Foreword, which has greatly enhanced its prestige.

I have always received a cordial encouragement in my writings from my zealous friend Dr. T. V. Kasturi, Managing Editor, National Medical Journal. But for his tenacious entreaties and finding place for this serial in the columns of the Journal during many years, the survey would not have been complete. I thankfully acknowledge his cordiality and help.

I am greatly beholden to a number of dignitaries who readily responded to my request by furnishing me with their bio-data and other kinds of information. I thank M/s. Sree Kantha Power Press, Mysore, for the neat printing in a very short time.

I consider my labours amply rewarded, if this first, humble contribution of mine, can kindle an iota of interest for the study of Ayurveda among the readers.

MYSORE,

8-8-1968.

K. R. Srikanta Murthy

FOREWORD

The author of this book Dr. K. R. Srikanta Murthy, L.A.M.S., H.P.A. is respected as a good scholar of Ayurveda. He had regular college training for his L.A.M.S. and Post-graduate training in Post-graduate Institute of Jamnagar where an Ayurvedic University has been established last year. When he was taking his course for the post-graduate degree, I had observed in him a tendency and craving to do some useful research work that may be helpful in reviving the pristine glory of Ayurveda.

After settling in Mysore he has continued to pursue his academic Activities in various ways. As an Associate Editor of National Medical Journal, he has contributed a number of articles and helped to organise and make the journal esteemable all over the country.

For the last few years he has concentrated his energy to compile a short history of the biographies of the Luminaries of Indian Medicine (Ayurveda) from the earliest pre-vedic period to the present day. This is a Herculean task and a very difficult subject but the author has the ardent zeal and courage to make a beginning in this direction; for this bold step he deserves all praise and congratulation from the Ayurvedic World.

The medical historian will find it difficult at present to compile and present to the world a regular and comprehensive picture of the History of Medicine in India. The reasons for such a condition are many and varied. The foremost of them is that the medical history is a part and parcel of the national and regional history. Thus, unless the facts of chronology and of the political and cultural history of India are fully established, it would not be feasible to give a correct portrayal of the medical part of Indian History. Regarding chronology nothing is certain before 328 B.C. the invasion of Alexander or at any rate before the seventh century B.C.

that is the time of the Buddha. There are, further, peculiar obstacles in ascertaining the chronology, names and biographical details of persons who have played important part in the evolution of Ayurveda in ancient period. Max Muller says:—From the actual works themselves written by the poets, philosophers and scientists of India, very little material is to be had pertaining to the life and work of the author. Most often even the name has to be learnt from the colophons or such other appendages to the original contributed by the editors, commentators and such others. The difficulties in computing the dates are augmented by the prevalence of different eras in vogue in various parts of India.

In spite of such indefinite and confounding circumstances the author persisted in his work and as a result of indefatigable industry and diligence he has been successful to complete and publish the book containing the sketches of the Luminaries of Ayurveda, past as well as present. On reading the sketches, one is convinced that he has taken great pains to collect the scattered data from various sources, with one clear motive that is to elucidate the fact that the luminaries, specially of the ancient period, possessed all-comprehensible knowledge; their methods of study-theoretical and practical—were quite scientific; they had humanitarian and universal spirit. They disseminated encyclopaedic information regarding evolution of man when in health and restoration of health when man was ill. In old Aryan culture such persons were considered authorities and entitled to write main classics. Charaka Maharshi defines such persons as follows:

रजस्तमोभ्यां निर्मुक्ता तपोज्ञानबलेन ये ।

येषां त्रिकालममलं ज्ञानमव्याहतं सदा ॥

आप्ता शिष्टाः विबुद्धास्ते तेषां वाक्यमसंशयम् ।

सत्यं वक्ष्यन्ति ते कस्मादसत्यं नीरजस्तमाः ॥

Cha. Su. 11/18-19

“The authorities are men who freed themselves from passion and ignorance by means of spiritual endeavour and knowledge; whose

understanding—embracing the past, present and future—is pure and at all times unclouded—it is these that are the authoritative, the learned the enlightened; their word is unimpeachable and true. Why will such men, devoid as they are, of passion and ignorance, give utterance to untruth?

The author has implanted a fresh and fertile seed in this particular aspect of the history of Indian medicine. The season in the Independent India is very favourable and higher studies and research in Ayurveda are fast progressing and it is hoped that some more scholars of Ayurveda may be inspired to do devoted work in this branch. I wish the author continues his endeavour in this very useful but undeveloped branch and contributes more and more in this matter year by year.

BOMBAY

17th May 1968.

P. M. Mehta.

*Heights by greatmen reached and kept
were not attained by sudden flight
For they, while their companions slept
were toiling upwards in the night.*

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LUMINARIES OF INDIAN MEDICINE

It is rightly said that "History of a nation is really the biography of its greatmen". This statement is more true in respect of all branches of knowledge. Philosophy, Religion, Science, Literature and as a matter of fact every bit of human knowledge has been propounded, illumined and propogated by greatmen. It is they who by their ingenuity mould their nature and progress. A keen and careful study of the life and activities of such great minds can bestow a true insight into the doctrines and the stages of their evolution. The contribution each one has made is to be taken note of in a proper perspective and only then the study of history of any branch of knowledge is said to be complete.

Ancient India was the original birthplace of many a great science, which fact has been undoubtedly established by latest researches. It attracted the attention of the entire ancient world and streams of inquisitive men travelled long distances braving many difficulties in their journey to come to India and learn something of her excellent scholarship. Ayurveda the Science of medicine was one such science which earned great fame for India and which influenced considerably the science of medicine of other ancient nations as well.

Ayurveda, is not merely a science of 'diseases and drugs' but has in its sphere every aspect of life. Many

greatmen of different vocations have contributed their valuable share to the growth and development of this science. The cream of experience of scholars of medicine, philosophy, ethics, religion and many more branches of knowledge is available in ancient treatises on Ayurveda.

This book aims at acquainting the readers with the life and work of some of those great personages who have shone bright in the firmament of Ayurveda since its beginning till the present day. It is needless to say that the period of this survey is a vast one starting at about 2200 B.C. covering many a million years and in this period more luminaries than those mentioned in this book have existed and given their share of knowledge. But the personages dealt with here are, beyond doubt, the brighter ones among them.

It is convenient to group these personages into the following three categories.

1. Mythological personages.
2. Semi - historical personages - Belonging to Pre-Buddhist and Early - Buddhist periods.
3. Historical Personages - from post - Buddhist period upto the present day.

Mythological Personages

Brahma : Brahma, the first of the Hindu trinity is believed to be the Creator of the Universe and also as the fountainhead of all knowledge. The four Vedas and their numerous branches were propounded by him for the benefit of living beings. He is

worshipped even to day as the originator of all phenomenon – abstract as well as concrete.

Considering that a good knowledge of the nature of life is necessary to living beings to lead a healthy, useful and long life, Brahma propounded Ayurveda – the science of life and taught it first to Prajapathi Daksha. Ancient Indian literature both medical and non-medical agree on the first preceptorship of Brahma but as regards his disciples opinions differ; Charaka samhita gives the geneology thus: Brahma → Prajapathi Daksha → Aswinis → Indra → sage Bhara-dwaja → Punarvasu Atreya → Agnivesha and others.¹

Sushruta samhita gives a variant only after Indra as: From Indra → Divodasa Dhanwantari, the Kashiraja as the second incarnation of Dhanwantari the Adideva → Sushruta and others.²

Kashyapa samhita mentions the geneology thus : Brahma → Aswinis → Indra → the four sages Kashyapa

¹ ब्रह्मणा हि यथा प्रोक्तमायुर्वेदं प्रजापतिः ।

जग्राह निखिलानादावाश्विनौ तु पुनस्ततः ॥

अश्विभ्यां भगवाञ्छक्र प्रतिपेदे ह केवलम् ।

ऋषिप्रोक्तो भरद्वाज ॥

अथ मौत्रीपरः पुण्यमायुर्वेदं पुनर्वसुः ।

शिष्येभ्यो दत्तवान् षड्भ्यः सर्वभूतानुकम्पया ॥ Cha.Su. 1/4-31

² ब्रह्मा प्रोवाच, ततः प्रजापतिरधिजगे, तस्मादश्विनौ. अश्विभ्यामिन्द्रः

इन्द्रादहं, मया त्विह प्रदेयमर्थिभ्यः प्रजाहितहेतोः ॥ Su. Su. 1/20

Vasishta, Atri, Bhrigu→their sons and disciples.¹ Brahma Vaivarta purana mentions Bhaskara the Sun god as the direct disciple of Brahma.² Thus the mythological view of origin of Ayurveda makes Brahma the originator and first preceptor of Ayurveda.

According to Sushruta samhita Brahma composed a treatise (*Brahma samhita*), of one lakh verses but later finding it too much for mortals to study, divided it into eight major parts viz, Shalya chikitsa (surgery) Shalakya chikitsa (treatment of diseases of organs in the head) Bhutavidya (demonology including bacteriology and parasitology). Koumarabhritya (paediatrics) Agadatantra (toxicology) Rasayana (rejuvenation) and Vajikarana (virilification). These are called the Asthanga of Ayurveda.³

Brahma samhita : the treatise alluded to the 'creator' might well be taken, only as a myth. However the finding of about eighteen formulæ ascribed to Brahma in the extant Ayurvedic literature makes it probable that there might have been a treatise by that name written by some other author having the name of Brahma or alluded to the 'creator Brahma' out of reverence. At present no such treatise is available.

¹ स्वयंभूवर्मा प्रजासिंखुः.....अश्विभ्यां कः प्रददौ, ताविन्द्राय,
इन्द्र ऋषिभ्यः श्वतुर्भ्यः कश्यपवसिष्ठान्निभृगुभ्यः, ते पुत्रेभ्यः शिष्येभ्यश्च।

—(Ka.Vim.)

² Br. Vai. Purana—brahma Kanda, ch. 16

³ Su. su. 1/6-7.

Vishnu : The second member of the trinity is invoked as ' Bhavaroga vaidya ' - physician who cures all the ills of birth and death '. Prayers are offered to him in reverence to bestow liberation from earthly bondage. His thousand and eight names are chanted by orthodox physicians even to this day during the administration of medicines and the patient is also told to worship him. Eight or ten formulae are found in Ayurveda classics bearing his name but there is no mention of any treatise alluded to him.

Shiva : The third member is more intimately connected with the science of medicine. In the Rigveda this deity is known by the name Rudra and not as Shiva. Many other divinities are also spoken of by this name and so, many Rudras are found in early Vedic literature. But, by the time of the Atharvaveda, Rudra became one of the supreme deities, and it is this Rudra the Pashupati who became recognised as one of the Hindu trinity. Innumerable are the references in the Atharvaveda to Rudra as the first physician and to his greatness in treatment. Later on in the pouranic period Rudra is addressed by such names as Shiva, Shankara etc., which indicate a change in his personality from the dreadful to that of benoivalence. He becomes the fountainhead of many branches of knowledge. Together with his consort Shakti, Shiva became the presiding deity of the various Hindu Tantric cults of which Rasashastra (alchemy) is also one. Mercury the chief substance used in Rasashastra is considered as the semen of Shiva and worship of Shiva is an essential

aspect of Rasashastra. He is thus Vaidyanatha, the Lord of physicians or Lord of Medical Science.

More than sixty formulae found in Ayurvedic texts bear his name. The following books are also ascribed to his authorship but it may safely be said that they are works of later authors reverentially alluded to Shiva.

1) *Ayurgrantha* 2) *Rudrayamala tantra* 3) *Kama-tantra* 4) *Shivasiddhanta* 5) *Ayurveda* 6) *Kailasa-karaka* 7) *Vaidyaraja tantra*.

Daksha : Daksha is known by his other name 'Prajapathi' the Lord of living beings. He learnt the science of medicine from Brahma and in turn taught the two Aswins. Not much reference is available either in general sanskrit literature or Ayurvedic literature as to his contribution to the science of Ayurveda except as the preceptor of Aswins.

Aswinikumaras : These twin deities still remain as an enigma to scholarship both ancient and modern. Rigveda describes that Nasatya and Dasra, the twin sons of Vivaswat (sun) came to be known as Aswinikumaras. During the time of Rigveda they were considered as celestial physicians coming down to earth whenever propitiated by faithful men to cure their ills. Rigveda abounds in citations of their medical skill and benovent deeds. Restoring youth to the the senile, providing artificial limbs, substituting organs of the body, curing blindness, lameness, sterility, leprosy, pthisis and many other diseases, performing surgical operations etc.,¹ In addition to Ayurveda

¹ R. V. i-92-18, i-117-22, i-119-9, vii. 8-19.

they learnt *Madhuvidya* the science of restoring the dead to life " from sage Dadhichi.¹ Both Charaka and Sushruta samhitas mention many of their wonderful feats.²

In the post-Vedic period, the Aswinis slowly relegated themselves to an inferior position and even oblations were not being offered to them in sacrifices. Sage Chayvana restored them the honour of oblation in sacrifices as a return courtesy for having regained his youth by the Aswinis. They ceased to come down to earth to help the mortals and remained only as Deva bhishaks - the physicians to gods.

There are about forty to fifty formulae attributed to Aswinis and also the following books

- 1) *Chikitsa sara tantra* (mentioned in *Brahma Vivarta purana*).
- 2) *Aswini samhita* (mentioned by Bhavamishra)
- 3) *Dhaturatna mala*
- 4) *Nadi nidana*.

These are to be considered as works of later authors but alluded to the Aswinis.

Indra : The chief of the Gods is the next celebrity in the field of Ayurveda. In the Rigveda he occupies a very high position and is prayed for protection against all kinds of evils.

During the time of Rigveda, this deity was coming down from heaven to help the kings of the earth in battle, to protect the cows of herdsmen from dasyus, to safeguard cities and forts from foreign invaders. In Atharvavedic times he was not

¹ 1-116-12 ² Cha. Chi. i-4/41-50



the overall lord but one among the many protective deities.

He is described as having great skill in medicine and did many healings—suturing the neck without hemorrhage, curing consumption, baldness and many other diseases¹ Indra taught Ayurveda to sage Bharadwaja. A few formulae ascribed to him are found in the Ayurvedic classics.

Bhaskara: or the Sun god, the superintending deity over the sight, eyes of men and all luminous objects is also found being worshipped in the Rigveda for cure of diseases.² According to Brahma vaivarta purana he is said to have learnt Ayurveda direct from Brahma and transmitted it to his twin sons the Aswinis. Two treatises *Bhaskara samhita*, a treatise on medicine and *Jnana bhaskara* dealing with evils of human existence, their causes and cures are ascribed to his authorship which again is only an allusion.

Agni: the god of Fire, is invoked in the Rigveda to wardoff diseases, to remedy the poison vandana formed at the nodes of some trees which cause swelling of the knees and ankles, to cure snake bite, insanity and such disorder.³

¹ R.V. 1-8-12.

„ 8-91.

„ 10-91

² R.V. 1-35-9.

³ R.V. i-12-7.

„ VII-50-2.

„ X-4-26.

„ VI-11-1.

Varuna : The god of Water is also invoked in the Rigveda to cure many diseases, to be benovolent towards men and cattle, not to cause Jalodara (ascitis) if they behave bad with him without knowing.

Marut : The god of Wind is another divinity propitiated for health and happiness. Many diseases are said to arise out of his wrath.

Soma :—During the time of Rigveda, Soma was a plant growing in Mujavat mountains, the juice of which was being used as an intoxicating drink. Its exhilarating effect made the people to believe the presence of a spirit or deity in that plant, so much so Soma came to be called as Oshadhi Raja-king of herbs and was raised to godhood, the process of preparing the Soma juice became a holy sacrifice and all things connected with it was sacred. Many hymns were composed in praise of Soma and the juice was being partaken as an 'Elixir of Life'. It conferred on the person longieivity, health, wealth and wisdom. In it the people found curative effects against many diseases. In the soma juice is found the first potion administered internally as an 'elixir of life' (rasayana) and a medicine (oushadha) Hence it is rightly said that Rasayana shastra originated from Somarasa. Ayurvedic classics describe the characteristic features and medicinal properties of Soma plant but its correct identification has remained still a knotty problem.

In course of time Soma-the king of herbs lost its supremacy and in the post-Vedic period the moon came to be known by the name Soma to whom the

epithet Oshadhiraja - king of herbs was however continued.

Dhanwantari :—Dhanwantari is the next celebrity in the field of Ayurveda about whom many different views are found in ancient Indian literature. The term 'Dhanwantari' is not found in any of the four Vedas. It is the later Puranas and Mahabharata which speak of him. According to Ramayana and Mahabharata, Dhanwantari is one of the products of Ksheerasagaramathana (churning of the milky ocean). He came out of the ocean proficient in Ayurveda, wearing white robes and holding the pot of Amrita (nectar).¹ The first person to bring nectar to this mortal world was thus Dhanwantari himself. Lord Vishnu distributed the nectar to the Devas excluding the Danavas tactfully. All the products of Samudra-

¹ धन्वन्तरिस्ततो देवो वपुष्मानुदतिष्ठत् ।

श्वेतं कमण्डलुं विभ्रदमृतं यत्र तिष्ठति ॥ M. Bh. Adi. 15/53.

जातः स हि समुद्रात्त मथ्यमाने पुरामृते ।

उत्पन्नः कलशात्पूर्वं सर्वतश्च श्रियावृतः ॥ —Harivamsa.

ततो निश्चित्य मथनं योषन्तुं कृत्वा च वासुकीम् ।

मन्थानं मन्दरं कृत्वा ममन्थुरमितौजसः ॥

अथ वर्षसहस्रेण आयुर्वेदनयः पुमान् ।

उदतिष्ठत्पुधर्मात्मा सदण्डः सकमण्डलुः ॥

—Val. Ram. 41/19-20

अमृतानन्तरं चापि धन्वन्तरिरिजायत ।

वैद्यराडमृतस्यैष विभ्रतपूर्णं कमण्डलुम् ॥

—Ibid. 41/-

mathana were later allotted to different divinities and Dhanwantari going to Bhaskara's (sun) share as both these persons were proficient in Ayurveda. So Dhanwantari became the disciple of Bhaskara.¹ He came to be known as Dhanwantari the Adideva—the first god physician of the three worlds. He later came to be considered as an incarnation of Vishnu and worshipped as such even to this day.

Skanda, Garuda and Markandeya puranas have a different story about Dhanwantari. Once sage Galava, while on his wanderings, became thirsty and requested a vaishya maiden named Veerabhadra who was carrying water to quench his thirst. She gladly obliged him and sage Galava blessed her with a son. She later gave birth to a baby, who was proficient in all sciences even while still young. He learnt Ayurveda from the Aswinikumaras and came to be known as Dhanwantari. He was married to the daughters of Aswinis and became the originator of the Vaidya community.

According to Sushruta samhita Divodasa a king of Kashi the teacher of Sushruta, styles himself as Adideva Dhanwantari, born again in Kashi to propagate Ayurveda specially Shalya tantra (surgery). This new school of healing by surgical methods has since then become famous by the name of Dhanwantari Sampradaya.

There is also mention of a Dhanwantari as the

¹ Vishnu, Brahavaivarta and Vayu Puranas.

court physician of the famous king Chandragupta II Vikramaditya of the 5th century A.D.¹

In the face of these various views it is wise to concur with the opinion of Bhavamishra that 'Dhanwantari, the Adideva, who was the incarnation of Vishnu took birth again as Divodasa at Kashi to propogate this science. In later times the term 'Dhanwantari' came to be used as a honorific title to any physician who achieved great eminence by his proficiency and skill in medical science.

There are a good number of books bearing the name of Dhanwantari viz., *Chikitsa darshana*, *Chikitsa kumudi*, *Chikitsa sara sangraha*, *Yogachintamani*, *Sannipatakalika*, *Dhatukalpa*, *Ajeernamrita maniari*, *Roga nidana Vaidyachintamani*, *Vaidya prakasha*, *Vaidya bhaskarodaya* and *Dhanwantari nighantu*. It is beyond doubt that these are the works of different scholars but reverentially alluded to Dhanwantari, the Vishnu incarnate.

Brihaspati: The preceptor of Devas is also credited with proficiency in Ayurveda.

Ravana : The king of Lanka is said to have been a master of many sciences of which Ayurveda was also one. It is said that he was an expert in Nadivigyana (pulse reading), Bala chikitsa (paediatrics) and also an author of treatises on those subjects. The following books are ascribed to him :—

1) *Kumara tantra*: This book is available in an incomplete form containing 201 slokas only with

¹ धन्वन्तरि क्षणकोऽमरसिंहशङ्कु वेतालभट्ट घटकपूर कालिदासाः ।

ख्यातोवराहमिरो नृपतेः सभायां राजनि वै वररुचेर्नव विक्रमस्य ॥

neither salutary verses in the beginning nor colophon at the end. Mention is made of bhasmas of Rasa- (Mercury) Vanga (Tin) Tamra (Copper) Roupya- (Silver etc., in the recipes. 2) *Nadi priksha* : as available now has 96 stanzas in all devoted to diagnosis of diseases by pulse reading 3) *Arkaprakasha* : deals with preparation of Arkas(aquous distillation of drugs) and their utility in therapeutics. Mention of opium as a medicine, description of phirangaroga etc., in the text goes to prove that this work is of recent period probably of the 16th century, A.D. 4) *Uddisha tantra* is another book alluded to Ravana, the nature of which is not known.

Sushena : Contemporary of Ravana, Sushena was a physician in the monkey army of Sri Rama. He was proficient in treatment as can be gathered from Ramayana. A treatise by name *Sushena vaidyaka* is available today, which deals with treatment of diseases with simple recipes. Internal evidence is not in favour of much antiquity for this book.

Nimi : Nimi who is considered as an authority on treatment of eye diseases is generally identified as the twelfth king of Ikshwaku genealogy. His epithets like Videhadhipa, Rajarshi and so on have led some scholars to opine that the famous king Janaka, father of Sita, is himself Nimi. But no reference is found in the Ramayana as to Janaka's proficiency in treatment of eye diseases. 'Janaka' was a family name as many Janakas are found mentioned in the puranas and the full name of Janaka the foster father of Sita was Shiradhwaja Janaka. Nimi was the

grand father of Shiradhwaja Janaka, who by a curse of Vasishta "lost his corporeal body but was placed by the gods in the eyes of living creatures". This story speaks allegorically of his proficiency in treating eye diseases. He is said to have written a treatise on Shalakyatantra. Many verses are quoted by later authors and commentators as those of Nimi, Videha, Mahavideha and Janaka. Two books *Vaidyaka sandeha bhanjini* and *Janakatantra* available today are found ascribed to Janaka.

II Semi-historical Personages

The quest for knowledge of the universe, its nature, the various physical phenomena; life and its purpose and of many more things, began very early in India as compared to other countries. The Rigveda (2500 B.C.) the first literary record of India—nay—even of the whole world—is 'a repository of hymns (mantras) extolling the deities of many natural phenomena. These hymns are not merely the poetic exuberance of simple people of that distant past who became enamoured by the great mysterious power of Nature, as some western scholars have opined but are the reverential prayers of wise men who had understood these phenomena in all their entirety, who saw in them great potentiality for the benefit of man and who actually did make use of them in some measure. Such great men of ancient times were called 'Rishis' and they are described as 'Mantra drastas'—persons who actually saw the mantras. Seeing a mantra figuratively means understanding the physical phenomena behind it. Each of these mantras has a presiding deity which is the personification of the physical phenomenon. Rigveda abounds in the names of such great men—the Rishis—who put to use many of the natural phenomenon occurring every minute for the benefit of man. They were in know of many techniques of harnessing the natural forces for the advantage of every man. Sage Bharadhwaja 'brought the heat of the sun for the benefit of man, sage Viswamitra created another

physical world, and so on. Many 'Rishis' were there who devoted their life for acquiring knowledge for the benefit of the entire mankind. They kept themselves out of the daily turmoils of life and devoted all their energy in 'tapas'.—physical and mental discipline—to obtain 'Jnana' or knowledge. They were free from passion, greed, jealousy and all other emotions and whatever they said and did were absolute truths and beneficial to one and all. Nothing lured them to utter falsehood nor to trivial worldly pleasures. They stood high in scholarship and conduct and propagated true knowledge. These sages are rightly called philosopher-scientists and a great galaxy of such eminent men were there in ancient India. They used to assemble at some places, quite often, to discuss about various subjects and exchange views. Many sciences and philosophies of India are born out of such assemblies and Ayurveda is one among them.

Charaka samhita describes one such assemblage of sages which was held on the slopes of the Himalayas for the purpose of learning Ayurveda from Indra and bringing it down to earth.

Among the Rishis thus assembled were; Angiras, Jamadagni, Kasyapa, Bhrigu, Atreya, Goutama, Sankhya, Pulastya, Narada, Asita, Agastya, Vamadeva, Markandeya, Aswalayana, Parikshit, Bhikshu-Atreya, Bharadwaja, Kapinjala, Viswamitra, Aswarathya, Bhargava, Chyavana, Abhijit, Garga, Shandilya, Koundinya, Varkshi, Devala, Galava, Kankayana, Kaikasheya, Dhomya, Maricha,

Kashyapa, Sharkaraksha, Hiranyaksha, Lokaksha, Paingi, Shounaka, Shakuneya, Maitreya, Maimitayani Vaikhanasas, Valakhilyas and a host of others—highly learned in philosophy but not much versed in the science of healing. This august assembly was unanimous in its opinion ‘that diseases which are hinderance to life are on the increase in the world, sickness and suffering bring obstacles in the achievement of the ultimate purpose of human life. They even shorten the span of life, they are to be warded off and good health restored. At present Indra in the heavens is the only one knowing the science of healing and who could be easily approached. Some one of us here should be deputed to this task.’ In accordance with this resolution, the sage Bharadhwaja volunteered himself for this task to the great joy of the assembly. Bharadhwaja went to devaloka besought Indra, learnt from him the science of healing, returned to earth and propagated the new knowledge among his other friends.¹

This may be considered as the first medical conference held in the sacred soil of India, in which a galaxy of Rishis both of India and other foreign countries took part, learnt Ayurveda and began spreading it for the benefit of mankind. Many of them even wrote great treatises on this science most of which are unfortunately not available now.

Among the sages who participated in the conference and contributed their valuable share for the progress of Ayurveda the following deserve mention.

¹ Cha. Su. 1/6-27.

Bharadhwaja : or Bharadhwaja Vajineya in full, belonged to the lineage of Atharvangirasa who was the propounder of Atharvaveda. He was the son of Brihaspati. A strange tale of superfoetation is connected with the name of Bharadhwaja. According to Vishnupurana and Bhagavata, Brihaspati impregnated Mamata the wife of his brother Utathya who was already carrying and the first foetus kicked out the new one. Brihaspati cursed the first child to become blind permanently (later the child grew up to be Deerghatamas) and gave the second child to the mother asking her to rear this child of double parentage (Dwajam bhara). The boy grew up to be called as Bharadhwaja.

Bharadhwaja, in course of time acquired great fame and became a Rishi. His name stands conspicuously in Rigveda and Atharva veda as well as in Ramayana and Mahabharata. He is credited with two great achievements viz., having brought the heat of the sun (gharma) to the earth for benefit of living beings and also the science of healing.

Having learnt the science of healing from Indra, he imparted it to other sages systematically laying the firm foundation of logical concepts. The first fundamental concept of Samanya-Vishesha-Guna-Dravya-Karma-Samavaya, is the most valuable contribution of Bharadhwaja. He remains for ever the bringer of the healing light, the father of science of medicine on earth.¹

¹ Cha. Sam. Jamnagar Edition Vol. I. Pp. 40-41.

There were few more persons of the name of Bharadhwaja. In Charaka samhita itself there is one Bharadwaja Kumarashira a contemporary scholar who took part in the seminars of sages and another Bharadhwaja a student of Atreya.

Two books ascribed to Bharadhwaja are extant now 1) *Bharadwajeeyam*-only one chapter on urinary diseases being available in manuscript from 2) *Bhe. shajakalpa*-a treatise dealing with preparation of medicines. There is a commentary on this by one Vekatesha, son of Avadhana Saraswati. Neither of these two books can be called as the acutal works of the great sage Bharadwaja.

Vasista: one among the saptarishis, he learnt Ayurveda from Bharadwaja. He is credited with two great treatises, one on law (*Vasishtadharma shastra*) and another on medicine (*Vasishta samhita*). The latter is quoted by Trimalla Bhatta in his yoga-tarangini but is not available to day.

Agastya: His name appears in the Rigveda as the author of several hymns. He also learnt Ayurveda from Bharadwaja. In his later life he crossed the Vindhya mountains and settled in south India. He is considered to be the progenitor of literature and science of Dravidians. He is venerated as the first propounder of the Siddha system of medicine popular in Tamilnad. Brahmavaivarta purana states that he learnt Ayurveda from Bhaskara and wrote a book on medicine called *Dwaidha Nirnaya*.¹ *Rudanthi Kalpa* is another book ascribed to him.

¹ Mss/G.O.M.L. Madras.

Garga : is also mentioned as the author of *Garga samhita* a treatise on medicine. He is quoted by Kavikanthahara in his prayogaratnakara.

Narada : the famous sage of the puranic literature he was well versed in many sciences. He is said to be the author of two *Narada samhitas*, one on music and another on law *Dhatuluksana* on Ayurveda dealing with pulse reading ; a purana text (*Naradeeya purana*) and a book of meditation (*Bhaktisootras*).

Chyavana : the famous sage who conferred divine status to Aswinis. Brahmapurana mentions Chayvana as the author of *Jeevadana* a treatise on Ayurveda.

Vyasa or Krishna Dwaipayana Vyasa in full, is also known as Vedavyasa and Badarayana. He is reputed as the author of Mahabharata and Brahmasutras and founder of the Mimamsa school of philosophy. He arranged the Vedas and made them easily available. He is quoted as a medical author by Arunadatta.

Markandeya : was an ardent devotee of Shiva. He is the author of *Markandeya Purana* and a treatise on medicine - *Nadi Prakasha* dealing with the science of pulse.

Sanatkumara : composed the *Sanatkumara samhita* which is a part of Pancharatragama. This section deals with the treatment of eye diseases.

Shounaka : also known as Bhadrashounaka is a teacher of Atharva-veda school and an authority on Dharma shastra. Arunadatta quotes him as a

medical author. *Shounaka tantra* — a treatise dealing with treatment of poisons and evils of inauspicious elements said to be the work of this sage is available in manuscript form.

Kanada : the sage who propounded the Vaishe-shika system of philosophy is said to have written *Kanada samhita* -- a treatise on Ayurveda ; only one section of this work is now available, dealing with Nadi vigyana in 105 verses only.

Kaukayana : was a famous physician of Bahlika Desha who came to India to participate in the conferance of sages. He is found to be an active participant in many symposia held in India as can be gathered from Charaka samhita. He remained in this country for a long time learning Ayurveda.

Atri : was another great sage, a composer of hymns and one of the saptarishis. During the time of Sri Rama he was living in Chitrakoota mountains in South India. He is the father of Punarvasu Atreya and Dattatreya. He is said to have written *Atri samhita*, a treatise on medicine which is found quoted by later medical authors.

Dattatreya : the son of Atri is said to be an incarnation of Vishnu and worshipped as such even today. A treatise on diagnosis and treatment of diseases embodying the teachings of Dattatreya by name *Naditatanidhi* is available today with a commentary in Telugu.

Punarvasu Atreya : the son of sage Atri and known also as Krishna Atreya, Bhagavan Atreya and Chandrabhagi, was one of the great sages well versed

in many sciences, mature in philosophy and a teacher of the science of medicine specially Kayachikitsa. Charaka samhita, the book par-excellence on Kayachikitsa identifies itself as the teachings of Atreya.¹ As a teacher of medicine Atreya was foremost. He presided over scholarly seminars and his concluding opinions based on wisdom and supported by arguments and examples were being accepted as the best by all those who attended such discussions.

"The spirit of reverence with which his disciples approach him as he is seated amidst sages and scholars, the finality his decisions acquire in the discussions and also the shifting scene of such assemblies from northern Himalayas to the southern plains of Kampilya are indubitable indications of the prosperity, wisdom and supremacy of Atreya as a teacher of medicine among the contemporaries. The stamp of methodical analysis and scientific exposition, he imparted to the mass of medical lore, that perhaps, lay till then in an amorphous heap of drugs and data, is of great significance. The stage of rationale or scientific medicine began with Atreya. Though the concept of the three controlling factors of the body, as of the universe, is contained in the Vedic literature, it is to Atreya that medicine owes its full elaboration of Tridosha concept in a consistent method based on a logic of elemental combinations and physico-chemical transmutations. With the theory of taste and its influences on metabolic and

¹ The opening line of every chapter of Charaka Samhita begins with 'thus spake Bhagawan Atreya.'

physiological functions and its application in therapeutics, the concept of Rasa-Guna-Virya-Vipaka-Prabhava of drugs, medicine passes from the empirical stage to a scientific stage based and supported on biophysical and bio-chemical concepts."¹

'Atreya stands supreme among the teachers of the science of life, a teacher conspicuous for sweet reasonableness, broad and comprehensive vision, clarity of definitions and above all an expert in the correlation of drug to disease. Atreya is a name immortal in Indian Medicine and will remain so as long as the science of life is studied and practised in the light and spirit of his principles and basic theories'².

Taking into view the internal and external evidence supported by historical consistency we are lead to place Atreya in a period not deflecting much on either side of the 8th century B.C. but certainly not later than 7th century B.C.³

He had six disciples, Agnivesha, Bhela, Jatukarna, Parashara, Hareeta and Ksharapani, of whom Agnivesha was the most brilliant. Each of them composed books on Kayachikitsa as enunciated by Atreya.

Some Mss. are available bearing the name *Atreya Samhita*—but their originality is still to be decided.

Agnivesha :—The illustrious pupil of Punarvasu Atreya composed a treatise embodying the teachings

¹ Charaka Samhita-Jamnagar Edn. vol. 1 pp. 66.

² Ibid. pp. 67.

³ Ibid Pp. 54.

⁴ Gaikwad Oriental series 114/5526 : R. G. Bhandarkar second report of search of Sanskrit M.S.S./p. 46.

of his preceptor faithfully. His compilation was declared as the best and acclaimed even by gods.¹

Bhagavata Purana mentions him as an incarnation of Agni,² born as the son of Devadatta and as such he is ascribed such synonyms as Hutasha, Hutasha-vesha and Vahnivesha. According to puranic literature Agnivesha was a great scholar and took part in yagnas conducted by Jaamadagani Parasurama.³ Not only was he an adept in the science of medicine but was so in archery also. As a student of Bharadhwaja⁴ and Agastya,⁵ in Dhanurveda he got from them the Agneyastra and in his turn taught this science to Drona of Mahabharata fame giving away the Agneyastra to him.⁶

‘The great heritage of the healing art left to us by Krishna Atreya would have been lost but for the herculian task of Agnivesha who made a detailed record of the exposition which flowed from the benevolent lips of his preceptor.’⁷

The following books are found ascribed to him.

1. *Agnivesha tantra*--The original treatise Agnivesha samhita is not available now but reliable evidences point to its existence upto the time of Shivadasa sena a commentator of Charaka samhita

¹ Cha-su. 1/37.

² Bhagavata 6-2/21-22.

³ Brahmanda purana 3/47-49.

⁴ Mahabharata Adi Parva 140/41.

⁵ Mahabharata Adi Parva 152/10.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Charaka Samhita Jamnagar edition vol. 1 P. 68.

of the 15th century A.D. who quotes references from this book. But the treasure of his wisdom is available to us, in the form of Charaka samhita which is but the redacted version of Agnivesha Tantra as is evidenced by the colophon at the end of every chapter of this great work. 2. *Anjana nidana*—A small compendium of about 235 verses giving a few important symptoms of almost every disease under Kayachikitsa. 3. *Nadi pariksha*—contains about 150 verses on the study of pulse. The last two books cannot be taken as the works of Agnivesha.

Bhela :— or Bheda was another pupil of Krishna Atreya, and a co-student Agnivesha. He also wrote a treatise on medicine—called *Bhela samhita*. It is available now in an incomplete form found as a mutilated manuscript in Telugu script at the Palace Library of Tanjore. It was first published by Calcutta University in 1921. Dr. Hoernle is of opinion that this Mss. might have been written round about 1650 A.D. The treatise compares closely with that of Charaka samhita in its arrangement of subject matter but profoundness of thought and expression is wanting in this work, which fact has lead Vagbhata to give a second place to this work.¹ It has at present 23 chapters out of 30 of Sutrastana, 7 out of 8 in Nidana, 5 out of 8 of Vimana, 7 out of 8 of Shareera, all the 12 and 30 of Indriya and Chikitsa respectively, 8 out of 9 of Kalpa and 7 out of 9 Siddhi sthanas.

¹मेडाय्याः किं न पठ्यन्ते..... ।



Many slokas of this treatise are incomplete and and it is a worthy book deserving completion by competent scholars.

Jatukarna :—A disciple of Punarvasu Atreya also wrote a treatise on Kayachikitsa—*Jatukarna Samhita* which is not extant now. It was available till the time of Srikanta Datta of the 13th century A.D. References from this book have been quoted by all the commentators of Charaka and Sushruta samhitas.

Parashara :—is a name which is very frequently met with in the Vedas and the puranas. One great Vedic rishi of this name, father of Vedavyasa was a composer of few Rigveda hymns. Scholars are divided in their opinion whether there was one or more Parasharas. Charaka samhita mentions a certain Parashara as a disciple of Punarvasu Atreya, who also wrote a treatise on Kaya chikitsa—*Parashara samhita*—which is not available now. References have been cited from this book by later commentators. Another work—*Takra kolpa*—a treatise on the use of butter—milk is also attributed to him.¹ Palakapya the celebrated veterinarian cites Parashara as an authority in the treatment of elephants.

Harita :—one of the co-students with Agnivesha is found to have written a treatise based on the the teachings of Atreya Punarvasu. This original work is not available now except for stray quotations by later commentators. But a poor caricature of a scholarly treatise is however available now as *Harita samhita*. It does not bear any semblance to other

¹ Bikaner Mss. Lib. No. 1438.

treatises of co students of Harita like Agnivesha or Bheda. The subject matter and arrangement of the work are very fissiparous. The citations referred to by later commentators of Charaka are not found in this book. The salutatory verses in the beginning are addressed to Shiva. Vagbhata is mentioned as the dominating physician of Kaliyuga and his works are authoritative on the subject, etc. Hence it may be concluded that the book is not the original work of the scholarly pupil of Atreya and that a certain anonymous author posterior to Vagbhata has passed it on in the name of Harita.

Ksharapani :—The last of the disciples of Atreya Punarvasu is also credited as having composed a treatise on Kayachikitsa, *Ksharopani samhita* which is not available now and references are cited by later commentators from this book.

Divodasa :—was a king of Kashi belonging to Chandravamsa.¹ He was a great scholar of that time well versed in all branches of knowledge. He led the life of an ascetic in the midst of his royal splendour. He was proficient in Ayurveda. He describes himself as the incarnation of Adideva Dhanvanthari, the celestial physician². Sushruta samhita, the book par-excellence on Salyatantra written by Sushruta, one of his pupils has much to speak of his personality and achievements. He is said to have learnt Ayurveda from Indra.³ (Probably through Bharadhwaja) and taught it to his pupils Oupadhenava, Vaitarana,

¹ Harivamsa ; Vayu & Brahmanda puranas.

² Su. Su. 1/22 Uttara 39/3. ³ Su. Su. 1/20.

Ourabhra, Pushkalavata, Karavirya, Gopuraraksita, Sushruta etc.,⁴ of whom Sushruta was the foremost. He is the originator of Salya Chikitsa, the school of surgery and this school came to be called in later times as the Dhanvanthari Sampradaya. Historical data as to the correct date of Divodasa is not available fully at present but scholars are of opinion that he should be assigned the same date as that of Punarvasu Atreya. (8th cent. B.C.)

The following works are ascribed to Divodasa, Dhanwanthi and Kashiraja :

Divodasa :—1) *Chikitsa darshana*,

Kashiraja :—2) *Chikitsa koutudi*,

3) *Ajeernamitra manjari*.

Dhanwantari :—

4) *Yoga Chintamani*, 5) *Sannipata kalika*

6) *Gutikadhikara*, 7) *Dhatukalpa*, 10) *Vaidyaprakasha*, 11) *Dhanwantari Nighantu*

12) *Vaidyaka bhaskarodaya* 13) *Chikitsa sara*.

The correct assignment of authorship of these books is yet to be decided.

Sushruta :—was the son sage Viswamitra and learnt the science of medicine from Divodasa, the philosopher king of Kashi who was considered as the incarnation of Dhanwantari, the God of medicine. There is uncertainty among scholars about his exact date but that he must have flourished before Mahabharata war (1500 B.C.) and during the period of

⁴ Su. Su. 1/3.

Shatapatha Brahmana of the Vedic literature being decided, approximately fixes his date as 6th or 7th century B.C. He lived the life of a rishi and wrote a treatise dealing chiefly with surgery.

Sushruta Samhita, that is extant now is shown by scholars to be not the original treatise written by Sushruta but a revised and redacted version of it. The original treatise contained 5 sthanas or parts dealing with only major surgery, while a later author has supplemented to this work, the Uttara Tantra dealing with diseases of eye, ear, nose and of Kayarogas also. This has led some scholars to opine that there were two Sushrutas. It was Nagarjuna, the Buddhist monk who revised and redacted the present treatise.²

Whatever change it might have undergone during the redaction the work remains still a book par-excellence in the field of surgery. The popularity it enjoyed in the past can be gauged by its many commentaries and its translation to Arabic before the end of the 8th century A.D. The description of surgical instruments, the details of surgical operations the post-operative care and other allied topics are very lucidly and profoundly dealt with. Many new vistas for development of surgical skill, even of the present day, can be found with an intelligent study and practice of these methods.

The other co-students of Sushruta also wrote treatises on surgery but unfortunately none of them

¹ Su. Su. 1/3.

² Dalhana Teeka Su. Su. 1/2